

Fall 8-15-2012

ENG 3009G-002: Myth and Culture

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English 3009-002: Myth and Culture
Fall 2012

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Office hours: TR 2: 00-3:30 p.m. and W 3:00-5:00 p.m.

Course Description:

This course will involve an in-depth look at the myths and culture of **three Asian** countries, namely, **India, China, and Japan**. In the Indian segment, we will read the **Hindu** and the **Buddhist** (the Hinayana or the Theravada) myths. The study of Hinduism will include the **Vedic** and **Puranic** (The *Mahabharata* and *Bhagavad Gita*) Mythology. The Chinese segment will include the study of **Confucianism** and **Taoism**. Finally, the Japanese segment will focus on **Zen Buddhism** and **Shinto** Mythology. The primary orientation of this study will be to develop a clear understanding of (a) **philosophical** and **religious interpretations** of the concepts of creation/origin of the world, death, divinity, fate, the ultimate goal/s of human life, etc., and (b) **social systems** and **moral/ethical values** of these cultures. Whenever possible, we will also compare the commonalities and differences among these three Asian cultures and mythologies.

Course Requirements:

Active preparation and class-participation – 15%
Mid-term exam – 25%
Final exam – 25%
One research paper, 5-6 pages – 35%

Text Required:

Ananda Coomaraswamy and Sister Nivedita. *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists*
Eknath Easwaran. *The Bhagavad-Gita*
R.K. Narayan. *The Mahabharata*
Victor Mair. *Tao Te Ching*
Walpola Rahula. *What the Buddha Taught* (Reference)
Wing-Tsit Chan. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*

Course Policies:

Discussion (participation) is an important component of this course. Your presence in class is important for everyone, but especially for you. Three unexcused absences will bring your final grade down by 1%. Three late appearances equal one unexcused absence.

Papers are due at the beginning of the class on the day they are due. For each day that the paper is late, the letter grade will fall by one full grade: an 'A' essay due on Friday will be a 'F' by next Thursday. ALWAYS MAKE COPIES AND BACK UP YOUR WORK!

Plagiarism Policy (English Department)

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism – “The appropriation or imitation of the language, of ideas, and/or thoughts of another author and representation of them as one’s own original work” (Random House Dictionary of the English Language) – has the right and responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.

Information for Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Tentative Syllabus.

Week 1

8/23 – Introduction to the Course, Myth: Definition, form, content and function

Week 2

8/30 –Introduction to Aryan Ideology and Vedic Mythology (Handouts)

Week 3

9/6 –Continued, Introduction to *The Mahabharata* (Chapters 1-5 from R.K. Narayan’s *The Mahabharata*)

Week 4

9/13 – *Mahabharata* (continued, Chapters 6-11 from R.K. Narayan’s *The Mahabharata*)

Week 5

9/20 – *Mahabharata* (continued, Chapters 13-16, and Epilogue from R.K. Narayan’s *The Mahabharata*), Review for Midterm Exam

Week 6

9/27 –Midterm Exam (75 minutes), Introduction to *The Bhagavad Gita* (Chapters 1-2 from Easwaran)

Week 7

10/4 – *Bhagavad Gita* (Chapters 3-6 from Easwaran), Introduction to Buddhism (Chapter 5 from Ananda Coomaraswamy's *The Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists* pp: 245-250, 261-276, and 283-285.).

Week 8

10/11 –Buddhism (continued)

Week 9

10/18 – continued, Introduction to Confucianism (Selections from Chapter 2, Wing-Tsit Chan's *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*)

Week 10

10/25 – Confucianism (continued), Conferences for the Research Paper

Week 11

11/1 – Conferences for the Research Paper

Week 12

11/8 – Research paper due at the beginning of the class, Introduction to Taoism (Selections from Chapter 7, Wing-Tsit Chan's *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*)

Week 13

11/15 – Taoism (continued.), Introduction to Zen Buddhism (material on e-reserve.)

Week 14

11/29 –Zen Buddhism (continued), Introduction to Shinto Mythology (material on e-reserve)

Week 15

12/6 – Shinto mythology (continued), Review for the Final Exam